

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BOARD

MC-130H, 84-0475

BAND E SARDEH DAM, AFGHANISTAN

12 JUNE 2002

On 12 Jun 02, at 2124 local time (1654 Zulu)], an MC-130H, S/N 84-0475, crashed near Band E Sardeh Dam, Afghanistan. The MC-130H, assigned to the 15th Special Operations Squadron, 16th Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Florida was participating in a night exfiltration mission to remove U.S. Army Special Forces troops from the area. The aircraft commander/pilot, co-pilot, navigator, electronic warfare officer, flight engineer, and two U.S. Army passengers ground-egressed the aircraft following impact with the ground. The two loadmasters and an Army Special Forces NCO were killed instantly upon impact with the ground. One surviving crewmember suffered a badly sprained ankle and chemical (fuel) burns on his face. One passenger suffered a neck injury. Other survivors suffered less serious injuries. The aircraft crashed in a barren area with no discernable property damage. No persons were injured on the ground. A fire that resulted from the crash destroyed the aircraft.

The aircraft had just taken off from an unimproved airstrip in the area after unloading U.S. Army equipment and troops when it impacted the ground 2.5 nautical miles from the airstrip.

The Accident Investigation Board President found by clear and convincing evidence that the cause of the flight mishap was the excessive cargo weight loaded on the mishap aircraft at the Band E Sardeh Dam landing zone. In particular, the weight was substantially more than the crew had planned for, and, as such, the previously planned, and later executed, takeoff speed was insufficient to support a successful takeoff and sustained flight departure by the aircraft.

The Board President also found that a substantially contributing factor to the mishap was the current method of cargo weight planning utilized by the deployed ground forces, and accepted by the aircrews, that relies upon the personal estimations of personnel in the field as to the weight of cargo to be loaded on aircraft in a combat environment.

Under 10 U.S.C. 2254(d) any opinion of the accident investigators as to the cause of, or the factors contributing to, the accident set forth in the accident investigation report may not be considered as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding arising from an aircraft accident, nor may such information be considered an admission of liability of the United States or by any person referred to in those conclusions or statements.